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This study examines, expecially for the rural district, ways to increase the effectiveness of college counseling for the whole community. The counselor often wants to refer an individual to a more specialized agency. Such referral is hard to make even in an urban setting, where the existing agencies are usually overcrowded, and worse in a rural area, where few or no such facilities exist (e.g., medical centers, employment services, public assistance, juvenile care, volunteer organizations). Representative of those needing special care are the drug addict, the potential suicide, the pre-psychotic, the unhappily married, the homosexual. Since the rural-area counselor meets these problems whether he wants them or not, the author suggests he list area resources, establish interagency contact, and encourage professional meetings for the whole community. The junior college, being so flexible, is a good starting place for expansion in (1) the use of its social science staff to coordinate social agencies; (2) anticipation of social problems with programs in child development, consumer economics, family relationships, etc. and seminars on issues of immediate local concern; (3) providing counseling services for the non-college population, even in remote areas and with some psychiatric consultation. A questionnaire was sent to 22 colleges, of whom 18 replied. The results showed a need for reappraisal of the college and its goal of full-dimensional service to the entire community. (HH)

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# AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND ITS COUNSELING CENTER

by Harold Heiner

Does the community college have an expanded challenge and responsibility to the community in areas of family service or agency coordination which are presently untapped? What responsibility does the community college counseling center have to its community? What community agencies and programs are available to serve the student and the family? How much overlapping of agencies, services, and functions is there in existing programs, and can the waste of personnel and resources, because of duplication, be reduced through greater interagency communication? These are some of the many questions which arise as one attempts to increase the effectiveness of the community college and its counseling center.

It frequently becomes apparent to the counselor, while performing his duties, that the needs of our students and community are too often frustrated due to insufficient or inadequate referral agencies.

The community college counselor of today operates in a setting collectively labeled "the community," but in actuality, consisting of a multitude of individuals presenting problems of sufficient variety and magnitude to challenge the most highly trained professional. At times, he is left, certainly, with a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment; but too often he feels the need to refer a client to a more highly trained specialist. Either because the problem has taxed

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his level of training, or perhaps because he must "unload" a problem which has become too time energy consuming for him. Regardless of the motivation for doing so, it would seem to many who operate from a large metropolitan base that the solution is a simple one. Simply refer the client to a more appropriate agency. One finds, however, that even in an urban setting, while such agencies may be willing to help they frequently already have an intensive waiting list. The problem is even more acute in a basically rural service area since referral agencies are either few in number or are nonexistent.

Perhaps a description of the professional and geographical setting existing in Skagit County, Washington will lend definition to the term, "rural", and illustrate the problem. The county boasts many of the typical service agencies in the form of schools, state employment service, hospitals, and medical facilities, department of public assistance, juvenile probation, police force, clubs and sporadic volunteer organizations as well as other agencies with limited and too typical sounding names and functions. Largely missing, however, are the mental health clinics, community sponsored recreational activities, community swimming pools and athletic clubs, marriage and child guidance clinics, community action groups and vocational guidance centers.

Even in an agricultural and very limited industrial county such as this, it would seem that the approximately 52,000 inhabitants are capable of supporting at least a few more programs and services. The limiting factors become apparent, though, when one analyzes the composition of the population in the several small cities, ranging from

3,000 to 9,000 people, and the outlying homes and whistle stop communities in the 1,735 square miles.[1]

The county is faced with a high proportion of unskilled workers, as well as retired persons, with a large number of skilled workers commuting to the area from the much larger cities in adjacent counties to the north and south. Add to this the increasing percentage of young persons, eighteen years and younger, and you have a situation in which the ratio of labor force to population in the county is decreasing while that within the nation as a whole is remaining fairly constant. As has been pointed out by Poole in his study, since 1959 Skagit County has accounted for 1.8% of the total population in the state, but only 1.4% of the total state income.

To further complicate the situation, there has been increased encouragement in recent years toward influencing migrant farm families to settle and take advantage of the agricultural opportunities. This increases the need for social action groups and services but does little, if anything, to supply the needed resources.

The area is also especially conducive to land speculation since it has a very moderate year-long climate, numerous lakes and rivers as well as mountain and ocean recreational areas. This further attracts retired people who frequently do not have a strong need or concern for family service organizations which ultimately must be financed through tax revenue. Speculation takes large amounts of land out of cultivation

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[1]This and the following county statistics are taken from Pool, M.G. and Associates, Comprehensive Plan (Dash Point, Washington: 1965) pp. 4-9.

directly and also indirectly by driving taxes up with the increasing property value, thus making farming less profitable.

It would certainly be tempting to ignore the entire issue as one which is unique to this community. Quite to the contrary, however, this seems more likely to be far from unique and likely to increase in the near future as more and more community colleges come into existence and as they get nearer to the many communities, large and small, and the people who need them. Even setting aside the question of whether or not communities need more family service organizations and facilities, they certainly could profit through greater integration or coordination of existing programs.

Getting back to the problems as they currently exist in the counselor's office under the previously described conditions--what does he do when a student wants to know where to go to get relief from heroine addiction without getting sent to prison? What do you do for or with the potential suicide or pre-psychotic, and what about the middle-aged owner of a small business who does not want to return to college but desires extensive vocational counseling? How do you help the young couples who desire marriage counseling but cannot afford the high fees of a psychiatrist or psychologist if there even exists such a professional in the community? The drug problem hits. Who is responsible for educating and combating in this case? Who can parents turn to for help when they recognize an impending problem with an adolescent? Is there anyone to help the homosexual who cannot determine whether his most severe problem is his guilt or his frustrated attempts at propositioning the counselor, teacher, or friend who has recognized his need

for help?

While none of these problems have easy solutions, the counselor soon realizes that they remain his to treat, if for no other reason than the lack of referral agencies. In attempting to facilitate the counseling process, I set out to establish better interagency communication and also conduct a personal inventory of area resources. A great deal was accomplished but the previously stated problems remain mine by default. There seems, however, to be a definite need and potential acceptance of any efforts to encourage professional meetings and programs at the community level. The problem lies in finding an organization which is flexible enough to move quickly and in an often unconventional manner to meet challenging problems which cannot wait to ripen until some relatively inflexible organization begins to bend. One organization which could meet these needs is the community college.

At first the idea of the college acting as a thermometer to measure social heat seems, perhaps, a bit unusual. Yet, if the college is actually responding to the needs of the community as it purports, then it becomes difficult to exclude the very important areas of family needs, and interpersonal relationships. I believe the role of the community college could, and should, be expanded in at least three areas.

1. The college with its pool of skilled social scientists and facilities, should actively assert itself in the area of coordination of community social agencies through professional, interdisciplinary conferences. These could, and should, be organized by the college as a means of bringing local helping agencies into contact with one another

for more effective interagency communication.

2. The college should be flexible enough to offer active leadership at a practical level in answer to community social problems. This parcticality should be evident both in the increased frequency of such social science courses as child development, consumer economics and family relationships, as well as in the applied versus theoretical teaching approach. Beyond these structured programs, the college should be alert enough to community concerns to respond quickly with seminars and discussions intended to help the community members evaluate and deal with local social issues. Simply because the social sciences have persisted in their theoretical, ivory tower approach to human behavior in many academic circles is not sufficient reason for the community college to take the same path. Regardless of what some of us may feel, psychology is more than running rats down a maze, and sociology has more to offer than drawing sociograms.

We should be ready and eager to draw from the best resources at our disposal to meet a problem head on. Even if the so called real experts begin answering the many critical questions, it is quite likely to be in a way not directly applicable to each community's unique situation.

3. Counseling resources should be extended to the entire community regardless of whether or not they are enrolled or ever plan to enroll in the college. In order to be successful, the service would have to receive extensive publicity. The resultant increase in clients would require additional counseling staff but would pay off in service rendered and increased acceptance of the college as an active organization sin-

cerely concerned with the individual. These counseling services should be established with equal strength in outlying areas of the district where extension courses are being offered and should be manned by trained counselors, well grounded in the community college movement and philosophy. A psychiatrist should be available at least on a part-time basis for consultation.

In an attempt to determine what the attitude of current directors of counseling is toward the idea of expanded involvement in the community, a questionnaire was mailed to each of the twenty-two community colleges in Washington State. Their responses not only revealed a wide range of opinions regarding the possibility of expanded involvement, but also disclosed that a number of them are not even fulfilling those existing needs which seem essential for even minimal support of the instructional process. Of the eighteen colleges which responded, five do not even offer continuing counseling services at night for currently enrolled evening students. The mean ratio is one counselor to 703 students with the range being (excluding those with no night-school counselor) one counselor for 350 students, to the least staffed which had one counselor serving 2,452 students. One of the colleges currently has only one counselor in the evening on a part-time bases serving the total night-school enrollment of 1600 students who are located on at least four campus or extension sites.

Realizing that there can be a discrepancy between what a person does and what he would like to do, the directors were also asked about their desires and availability for expanded service to the community.

Sixty-three percent felt they would offer counseling to members of the community who have not been and do not plan to enroll as college students, yet only twenty-five percent of them encourage such contacts through publicity. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents believe that the counseling center should move toward an expanded role in the community as an independent service in itself. An equal number disagreed and twenty-six percent felt that the answer to such a question would depend upon the situation in each service center.

If education has as its goal the development of human potential, then it is in the same business as counseling and the two may as well join forces. This could seem highly heretical to those administrators and educators who have not even liberalized their thinking enough to recognize that school counselors should go beyond educational and vocational problems with their own students, not to mention extending all forms of counseling to the community.

A college which meets only the intellectual and vocational needs of the individual or community is only doing part of the job and has not really recognized what can and must be done. Anyone with an emotional problem will not function fully either academically or vocationally, and no academic or vocational problem is without emotional implications.

Of course, as is too evident, community colleges in some states are not financed in a way which easily lends itself to the kind of community service being called for here. That is not a limitation in the proposal but in the system of financing!

In the state of Washington we must finance education in terms of the FTE or full-time equivalent student, and traditionally a student must sit through ten to twelve weeks of academic rigor in order to qualify the college for state reimbursement. In the end his success is measured by a grade which likely reflects more reading and memory ability than insight. Now who ever heard of a child waiting for his parents to become part of an FTE and be certified with a grade before he passes that critical but often recognizable point just before serious delinquency? It is just as unrealistic to assume that the present system of financing necessarily must stop progress.

An obvious alternative to the present method of financing, and one which may be on its way in, is program financing. This method has definite advantages and would be appropriate to the counseling operation even though it is somewhat more difficult to predict needs in this particular program than in most others. It is evident that further studies are necessary before the costs can be accurately assessed.

We have already reached the stage of development enabling us to establish a short-term vocational training program in nearly any area almost overnight. It seems just as feasible to progress to the point of offering short-term group and individual counseling suited to the needs of the community and receive state reimbursement for doing it.

As it is, some social science and counseling faculty are active on a volunteer basis in community projects anyway. Efforts such as tutoring and encouraging education among minority and migrant groups;

volunteer court and counseling service; coordination of student volunteer service as well as taking advantage of speaking opportunities to local groups. If they are effective as volunteers, why not increase their effectiveness through financial support and increased availability of time?

If desirable changes are not aggressively planned for, we have no reason to assume their eventual arrival. That is why we need to begin now to reevaluate our purpose and press for community college development with a planned goal of full dimensional service to the academic, vocational and personal needs of the entire community and its families.

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